

# MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



## *Office of Public Information*

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### **STATE COMPLETES CONVERSION TO CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM; CHIEF JUSTICE THANKS FRIENDS OF THE COURT**

LANSING, MI, September 30, 2003 – In the wake of what she called “a huge effort by all involved,” Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Maura D. Corrigan thanked Michigan’s Friends of the Court for their work on the statewide conversion to the Michigan Child Support Enforcement System, known as MiCSES.

“The Friends of the Court did not ask for this task,” Corrigan said. “Not only does federal law require the state of Michigan to convert to the statewide system, but Michigan faced \$147.5 million in federal penalties if all 83 counties did not convert by the September 30 deadline. That money would come out of funds that the federal government would normally provide for Michigan’s child support operations, so the penalties would have a devastating effect on the state’s ability to enforce child support.”

While other states across the country have experienced difficulty converting to the federally-mandated computer system, the Michigan project was particularly complicated, Corrigan said.

“In most other states, child support is handled through one central state agency, much as worker’s compensation is handled here in Michigan,” Corrigan explained. “It would be hard enough for one agency to convert to a new, unfamiliar computer system.

“But child support in Michigan is handled by local Friend of the Court offices throughout the state. We had to convert, not a single agency, but 83 counties and 57 court circuits, each with their own existing system.”

The Wayne County Friend of the Court, which has the state’s largest child support caseload, was instrumental in the conversion, Corrigan added. “The Wayne County Friend of the Court is especially deserving of praise because its version of MiCSES became the model for the entire state,” she said. “When federal authorities visited Michigan in 2002, they made it clear that the Wayne County system had the functions they required for certification.”

Corrigan added that Friend of the Court offices “have been, unfortunately, the targets of the understandable frustration that child support payers and recipients felt when support checks were held up during the conversion, or when other errors cropped up during the conversion process. There are many people who deserve heartfelt thanks for

all their hard work during this time, including state prosecutors and the chief judges of each circuit court. I particularly thank the Friends of the Court because they had to make the conversion work while still attending to customers' needs, including issues that arose because of the conversion.”

While federal authorities will not issue final approval of the MICSES conversion for some weeks, Corrigan said, “We are optimistic that Michigan will not only avert the \$147.5 million in future penalties, but will receive a refund of about \$35 million in penalties already paid if federal authorities certify the system.”

Of that refund amount, \$6 million is slated for the state judicial branch, under an appropriations bill passed by the state Legislature earlier this year.

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